

Cultural Adventures Tours for the Young-at-Heart

Explore Galapagos Escorted Trip

12 days - \$3195 - July 31 - August 11, 2012

*Enjoy a soft adventure that includes hiking, snorkeling and sailing during the day while returning to your comfortable hotel each evening

*Visit to Isla Isabela the youngest and largest island

*Proximity to exotic wildlife---sea lions, iguanas, giant tortoises, boobies, and more

* Group size is limited to 14 or less travelers

Highlights:

- Ride in a cable car over the city of Quito
- Snorkel at Kicker Rock on San Cristobal Isle
- Explore the lava tubes on Santa Cruz Isle
- Hike and horse ride to Sierra Negra volcano on Isla Isabela
- Enjoy snorkeling daily on the Galapagos

Trip begins with 3 nights in Quito, followed by 7 nights visiting the Galapagos Islands. Trip cost based on double occupancy.

Included: All hotels, local land & sea transportation including flight from mainland Ecuador to the Galapagos Islands, tours, snorkeling & kayaking equipment, hike to volcano, airport transfer, escort, guides and 22 meals. **Not Included:** International flight to Ecuador and the \$100 Galapagos Park fee.

Itinerary:

Day One - Arrive in Quito - Arrive in the capital city Quito, sometimes referred to as the cultural capital of the Americas and check in at the Hotel Quito. You will be met at the airport and driven to our hotel. Hotel Quito or equivalent

Day Two - Mitad del Mundo - This afternoon we'll take a trip to the Mitad del Mundo or Middle of the Earth where you'll be able to stand on both sides of the equator. The day will end with an Andean welcome dinner so you can get acquainted with the other guests on the tour. Hotel Quito (B, D)

Day Three- Quito City Tour - Tour Quito, a cosmopolitan and historic capital city, located in the majestic Andes Mountains. Quito's colonial quarter, the largest and best preserved of South America, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. After lunch in the colonial quarter, we visit the cable car or Teleferico, a special treat as you go up the Pichincha volcano. The view from the top is spectacular, covering the city of Quito, the surrounding valleys and snow-capped volcanoes. Hotel Quito (B, L)

Day Four - Loberia Beach, San Cristobal Island, Galapagos - After breakfast, we'll transfer to the airport to take the flight to the Galapagos. Upon arrival we'll take a seashore expedition to Loberia Beach to view the marine iguanas that blend so well with the black, pitted lava coast. You'll also observe many sea birds, such as frigates and boobies, as they fight against the wind. And you'll have your first opportunity to snorkel with the sea lions and sea turtles! The day ends with dinner at the harbor. Hotel Casa Blanca or equivalent (B, L, D)

Day Five - Tortoise Rearing Center, El Junco Lake, San Cristobal - We'll start the day with a visit to the Cerro Colorado land tortoise rearing center where we'll learn about the conservation plans of the National Park Service and watch for land turtles as we walk along the trails. We'll explore El Junco Lake, the only permanent, fresh water lake in the Galapagos. Walking around the caldera of the lake, we can appreciate a lovely panoramic view of the green highlands against the deep blue color of the sea. We'll have a picnic lunch in the highlands before visiting a coffee plantation. You'll have free time in the afternoon to swim, snorkel, kayak, bike or just relax. Before dinner on your own, we'll take a dinghy tour of the bay to observe harbor activities, look for sea turtles and watch sea lions climb on the fishermen's boats. Hotel Casa Blanca (B, L)

Day Six - Lobos Island & Kicker Rock, San Cristobal - All aboard as we cruise to Lobos Island and Kicker Rock to enjoy the colonies of sea lions, floating sea turtles and sea birds. A highlight of the day will be snorkeling through the channel at Kicker Rock and, if we're lucky, viewing hammerhead sharks. Lunch will be served onboard. Swim, snorkel or roll up your pants as you explore Wizard Hill, the best beach of the Galapagos. As local musicians perform, we'll end the day with a Galapagos lobster dinner. Hotel Casa Blanca (B, L, D)

Day Seven- Highlands, Santa Cruz - This morning we sail to Santa Cruz Island where we'll visit the highlands to walk through lava tunnels and among giant land tortoises. Lunch will be at a farm in the highlands. There will be time to swim and snorkel in the afternoon. The evening is free for you to explore the town of Puerto Ayora. Mainao Inn or equivalent (B, L)

Day Eight - Tortuga Bay, Santa Cruz - Morning walk along a path through a cactus forest to enjoy a beautiful, white sand beach with iguanas, pelicans, and flamingos. After lunch on your own, you'll have an opportunity to kayak before we take a harbor tour and explore some of the small inlets to observe the birds and animals close up. Dinner together. Mainao Inn (B, D)

Day Nine - Charles Darwin Station, Santa Cruz - A visit to the Charles Darwin Station where research focuses on how to preserve the islands starts the day. Free time and lunch on your own before we travel to Isle Isabela. Once you've unpacked, we'll walk along the beautiful fine sandy beach observing Booby's and other birds fishing for dinner. There'll also be time for a swim or to snorkel before we have dinner at the harbor. El Sol or equivalent (B, D)

Day Ten - Sierra Negra Volcano, Isla Isabela - Today we hike to Sierra Negra Volcano for a fantastic view of the second largest caldera in the world. We'll hike for about 6 miles (9 km) on a moderate-gradual uphill trail before enjoying lunch at the top. This afternoon we'll take a dinghy tour to Tintorerias Inlet to see Galapagos penguins, the second smallest in the world, observe white tip sharks, marine iguanas, sea lions and boobies nesting. You'll have a final opportunity to snorkel before dinner at the beach. El Sol (B, L, D)

Day Eleven - Today we return to the mainland of Ecuador. We'll take a ferry to Baltra to catch the flight back to the mainland. The tour ends when we reach the mainland. (B)

Optional two-day trip to Otavalo market & the Andes available after this trip

This is an active adventure. Participants must be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 2 - 4 hours of physical activity everyday.

For more information go to www.culturaladventures.info or call Connie Champlin at 317-908-1220